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The Adequacy of Judaism

By
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To
Mr. Samuel Grabfelder
True friend and unwearying
doer of good

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The Adequacy of Judaism

I

THE MODERN DISCONTENT WITH JUDAISM

“Have I been a wilderness to Israel, or a land of deep darkness? Wherefore say My people: We are broken loose, we will come no more unto Thee?”—*Jeremiah 2, 31.*

IN various circles nowadays we find discontent with Judaism. It shows itself either in indifference or hostility to our ancestral religion, or in actual defection from it. At first blush, we are apt to regard it as an entirely new occurrence in Israel; but the student of history knows better. Such discontent has appeared among us, frequently, from earliest times. Moses knew it; Samuel knew it; and so did every subsequent prophet.

Perhaps the most poignant reference to such discontent and desertion we find in the pages of Jeremiah. And to that great

prophet the conduct of his people seemed the more deplorable because he realized how much it was due to the people's lack of understanding and appreciation of the faith they had inherited. Because they did not know the contents of their religion, they went astray, roaming about in quest of other religions. "Why do you contend with Me? saith the Lord. O generation, see ye the word of the Lord! Have I been a wilderness to Israel, or a land of deep darkness? Wherefore say My people, We are broken loose, we will come no more unto Thee?"

These questions might well be addressed literally to the Jewish men and women of our own generation, who neglect their religion because they are not aware of its beauty and brightness. For that is just the reason why so many are either averse or lukewarm to their ancestral religion.

Of course, among those who neglect Judaism, or abandon it, there are people impelled by other motives, too. We know that some drift away because they are too materialistic, too earthy, to care for any-

thing of a spiritual character. Others are breaking away because of a foolish snob-bishness, which makes them think that they can find greater happiness or satisfaction in churches considered more fashionable than the Synagogue. One even hears of people who have changed their religion, strange though it may seem, because of some personal slight or grievance.

But apart from such, there are a great many who have grown apathetic or antagonistic to Judaism because of dissatisfaction, spiritual dissatisfaction — and their condition is the more to be deplored because it is founded on error and lack of knowledge. They have been led to think that Judaism is spiritually poor, that it is incompatible with the highest social and ethical demands of the present, that it is inadequate to the spiritual needs of the age. To them we might well address the words of the Lord in Jeremiah's days: "O generation, see ye the word of the Lord! Have I been a wilderness to Israel or a land of thick darkness? Wherefore say My people, We have broken loose, we will come no more unto Thee?"

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In effect, the Lord certainly has not been a wilderness to Israel, nor a land of thick darkness. Even those who are most dissatisfied with Judaism at present, will not deny that Judaism has meant a great deal to the world. The history of the Jewish people is the most wonderful of all histories. That is conceded by all. The duration, the heroism, the martyrdom of the Jew is the marvel of mankind. They have gained the tribute of admiration even from our foes. No one denies that the Jew has made valuable contributions to civilization. Nevertheless, it is true that the chief glory of Jewish history has come from Israel's religion, and it is by his religious teaching and idealism that the Jew has made his most valuable addition to the civilization of mankind. It matters not how much that idealism may have remained unrealized, the very fact that the world has accepted it, and made it the foundation of its foremost religions, constitutes the greatest glory of Jewish history.

No one, therefore, can say that Judaism has meant nothing to the Jew in the past.

Nor can one forget that it is Judaism that has formed the chief support of the Jew himself, making his life spiritually rich and strong throughout the centuries of persecution, and rendering him both ethically and religiously superior to his environment during the ages of superstition and idolatry.

But does not the same thing hold good today? Those who will take the trouble really to examine Judaism will have to admit that today, no less than before, Judaism not only is equal to all the spiritual needs and ethical demands of the Jew, but forms the foundation of what true and durable religiousness there is in the world at large. Every religion, in these days of ours, is called upon to examine and to revise its contents: Judaism has nothing to fear from the new age as far as its own principles and precepts are concerned, if we consider what men today regard as the requisites of a religion.

For one thing, people today require a religion that shall combine two qualities—reasonableness and spirituality. No one

wants a religion which runs counter to reason. On the other hand, no one wants a religion which ignores the heart, or the spirit. "Religion is the poetry of the heart," a French writer has said. An arid rationalism is quite as offensive to modern man as an irrational superstition.

This combination of qualities is just what Judaism possesses. The heart and the mind—reason and spirit—have always played an equally important part in its domain. From the very first, and throughout its history, Judaism has stood for the cultivation of the mind as part of religious duty. It has not only sanctioned but required the application of reason to the perception of the religious mysteries and the pursuit of the religious life. No religion has ever been so clearly opposed to superstition as Judaism. On the other hand, the teachers of Judaism have known and taught that the greatest thing in the understanding and fulfilment of religion is the heart—or the spirit. If today we find Jewish men and women who think that they cannot cling to the religion of their fathers because they want a

religion compatible with culture and spirituality—if it is because they miss this quality in Judaism that they are dissatisfied with it—then, I say, they wrong Judaism. Philo certainly was a man both cultured and spiritual; so was Moses Maimonides; so was Moses Mendelssohn; so are many men and women of our own time whom one might name. And they have found Judaism adequate.

No less do those wrong Judaism who leave it alone because they are interested in the social questions of the age. Such people we find in all classes, but particularly among the working classes. Because they are concerned with the improvement of the common lot, they think they must go to cults which deal with such questions more earnestly than Judaism. But is there any excuse for such a course? Is it not true that no religion ever laid such stress on the importance of social justice as Judaism? Were not the Prophets the greatest champions of the poor and the oppressed that ever lived? Were not Moses and Elijah and Amos the most uncompro-

mising fighters for social righteousness the world ever knew? Is it mere accident that so many of the foremost social reformers have sprung from Israel, or is it not rather due to the passion for the common good with which Judaism has filled its devotees? "Israel," says Renan, "first gave form to the cry of the people, to the plaint of the poor, to the obstinate demand of those who hunger and thirst after righteousness." If any one turns his back upon Judaism because of concern for the common good, he shows lack of knowledge of the contents and the commission of his religion.

It is such lack of appreciation of Judaism that is at the basis of most of the modern discontent with it.

This condition it is our duty to try to change. As friends of Judaism, we should seek to spread knowledge of it among our fellowmen, and especially among our own.

Let us realize the riches and truth of Judaism; then will discontent give way to love and fidelity.

II

NEED JEWS BECOME CHRISTIANS?

"Why gaddest thou about so much to change thy ways?"—*Jeremiah 2, 36.*

THE discussion of the question of whether Jews need become Christians, I do not mean to take up in a spirit of controversy or strife. Rather do I wish to approach it in the spirit of Abraham's words to Lot, recorded in the old story. "Let there be no strife," said the Patriarch, "between you and me, between thy shepherds and my shepherds, for we are men and brothers." Similarly, Jew and Christian may well seek to avoid quarrel and strife. There are many things in which Judaism and Christianity might work together, for the common good. And it is fortunate that there are numerous instances of the shepherds of both religious groups working together in a spirit of manly fellowship.

Yet, that does not exempt the Jew from the duty to come to the defense of his own sacred cause when its work and future are imperilled.

The observer of Jewish life cannot fail to see what a large number of Jewish people have lately drifted into Christian churches. There are those who either ignore this phenomenon or attach no importance to it. But no true lover of the Jewish people and its religion will adopt such an attitude. Better far to face the fact, and to see what can be done.

The fact, however, is that in one form or another Judaism has lost a considerable number of its adherents, or of those born into its fold. A large number of Jews in recent years have been lost to Judaism either because they have joined outright Christian churches, or because they have joined organizations on the borderland between Judaism and Christianity and forming a transition to Christianity, or because they are living under the impression that Christianity is better than Judaism, and thus are likely

to become Christians eventually. Besides, it is purblind to overlook the earnest and widespread effort put forth by Christian groups to evangelize the Jew; in other words, to convert Jews to Christianity. Right here in New York there are societies actively engaged in such work, and many Christian missionary agencies are united in the endeavor to win Jews, and particularly Jewish young people, over to the Christian faith.

Is it not time to face these conditions squarely? Is it not our duty, at least, to try to answer the question as to whether Jews have any good reason for quitting Judaism in favor of the Christian religion? I think it is. "It is time to act for the Lord, when so many are forsaking the Divine Law."

The reason chiefly given by those who would have the Jew turn Christian, is that thus only can one hope for salvation. Time was when such an affirmation was considered a good argument. The word salvation had a cryptic meaning which, though not under-

stood, was deemed sufficient. It overawed the faithful—the person of religious bent. But is the use of the word salvation today enough to convince anybody? Today we like to analyze the terms we use, whether the terms be spiritual or social, political or religious. The trouble is that often we employ terms we really do not understand. Today we seek clarity. If people knew better the meaning of the words they use, a great deal of the present-day confusion and misunderstanding would disappear.

What, then, is meant by salvation? If it means salvation of the soul in the hereafter, no sensible person will agree that one must leave one's own inherited religion or forfeit one's soul in the hereafter. Why should one have to become a Christian in order to safeguard one's happiness after one's death? Why should one assume that all those outside the Christian churches have any less chance beyond the tomb than the followers of Christianity? The hereafter is shrouded in mystery for all of us—for the Christian as much as for the non-Christian—and it is presumptuous for any one to affirm that we

must accept his creed in order to secure our share in the world to come. Certainly, the ancient rabbis were more generous and more religious when they affirmed that the righteous of all nations shall have a share in the world to come. Modern men, who do their own thinking, will surely prefer such a doctrine and hope to that of the religious restrictionists who would have us believe that unless one turns Christian, one may not hope to be saved in the hereafter.

Salvation, however, may mean another thing. It may signify spiritual satisfaction and peace in this world, rather than bliss later on. Indeed, this sort of spiritual satisfaction is sought by all those who are conscious of a soul, and to whom the soul is the most important possession. Such people may well inquire whether, being Jews, they can secure deeper spiritual satisfaction and serenity by abandoning Judaism and adopting the religion of the Christian world.

Naturally, this would be the case if Christianity were superior to Judaism as a religious doctrine and system. But is it superior? I can conceive that one born into

Christianity might say yes, inspired by inheritance and environment. But no thoughtful Jew could possibly answer this question in the affirmative, for the simple reason that as a religion Judaism has all the advantages and none of the disadvantages of traditional Christianity.

Is not what is going on under our own eyes instructive? Every student of the Christian religion knows that when it first came into being it derived some things from Judaism and other things from Paganism, using the word Paganism not in an invidious sense, but as representing the thought and life of ancient Greece and Rome. Early Christianity formed a coalescence of Jewish and non-Jewish teachings, ideals, and ceremonies. What we witness today, however, is a gradual elimination from Christianity of its non-Jewish elements and concentration upon those parts that came to it from Judaism. Faith in God, insistence on righteousness, the interpretation of religion in terms of justice and service—these are the notes struck today

with increasing force and clarity as constituting true Christianity.

On all hands, we witness efforts to represent Christianity as a religion standing for such concepts and commands. Those dogmas which once upon a time formed the gravamen of Christian argument, one hardly meets with in public discussion or practical propaganda. They have been either abandoned or relegated to the background. But the elements which are accentuated today are the very ones which Christianity inherited from Judaism. It is Judaism that taught that faith and service were the all-in-all of religion, and Judaism has the advantage of never having lent itself to those other concepts which have proved a millstone about the neck of Religion, and which now are being rejected.

Why, then, should any Jew today leave his own religion in favor of Christianity? How could he possibly hope to find it more productive of spiritual contentment and bliss?

I know there are those who are fascinated

by the figure of Jesus. They are fascinated by his life and teachings—by his idealism and martyrdom. But that surely is no reason for abandoning Judaism. For, Jesus, as the student knows, was a Jew, from birth to death, and whatever he taught was a reflection of the Jewish Scriptures or of his own Jewish soul. This is a truth recognized not only by the Jewish student, but admitted more and more by Christian students as well. Only the other day I received from abroad a new life of Jesus, by Professor Wernle, of the University of Bâle, one of the leading writers on the subject. His very first sentence is a declaration that Jesus was a Jew and a product in both flesh and spirit of the Jewish people. Whoever does not like the fact, says Professor Wernle, or is prone to ignore it, need but open the Gospels and read them with open eyes.

As far as the religious and ethical teachings of Jesus are concerned, there is nothing in them but a confirmation of Jewish idealism, and no one needs turn Christian in order to understand them or to reiterate them. On the contrary, it were better

far Christians turned Jews—they might be more likely then to penetrate the spirit of Jesus's teaching and seek to put it into effect in so-called Christian civilization.

Unfortunately, there are some who imagine they can ingratiate themselves with the world, or rise on the social ladder, by turning Christian. In reality, that is seldom the reward of apostasy. In his heart of hearts, the sincere Christian detests conversion to his church for worldly ends or for the sake of social recognition. Such traffic in convictions is an insult to every true believer, and while a Christian may want to make converts, he detests any one who comes over to his denomination for the gratification of social vanity. Instances have been known where Jews who have joined fashionable churches in order to secure social honors, have been duly snubbed by their new co-religionists—even changes of name and of nose proved futile. Besides, as far as prejudice is concerned, baptism is no cure. In the middle ages there was a certain pope whose ancestors, several generations back,

had been Jews. That pope met with certain opposition, and his antagonists kept on referring to him as the Jew pope. One does not escape prejudice by apostasy. It only aggravates the bigot. *Zanah Yisrael tobh oyebh yirdepho*—says the Prophet: “When Israel forsakes the good—which, say the rabbis, means the Torah, his faith—the foe pursues him the more.” One is more likely to gain respect—even the respect of bigots—by a manly loyalty to one’s faith.

When Lord Reading was British Ambassador to this country, I am told, he was invited by a large commercial organization of this city as a guest of honor to one of its functions. The affair happened to fall on a Saturday, and Lord Reading declined the invitation because it was on a Saturday, his Sabbath, saying he was not in the habit of attending social functions on the Sabbath. Down in Kentucky I had a friend, Mr. Lewis N. Dembitz, who was both a celebrated lawyer and great scholar. Mr. Dembitz was an observant Jew. He never attended court on Saturday, and that fact became so well known, and was treated with

such respect, that whenever a case in which Mr. Dembitz was to appear was set for a Saturday it was postponed by the court to some other day.

Is not such manly conduct more likely to down prejudice than apostasy?

Besides, how can one possibly hope to gain spiritual satisfaction and peace by betraying one's own soul? It is the great teacher of Christianity who is said to have asked the question, What shall it profit a man to gain the whole world if he lose his soul?

What we need is a deeper appreciation of our own religious heritage and a greater regard for the things of the spirit. If we acquire that, we shall realize that we need not go outside our own faith—that we need not roam about changing our ways—in order to find spiritual contentment and peace.

Yet, have we done our full duty by merely answering the question we have put, and proving that there is no good reason for Jews becoming Christians?

No! We have another duty: it is our

duty to do something to counteract the efforts of those who are taking Jewish men and women away from us. It is our duty to try to save Jews from the perils of apostasy surrounding them. We should try to multiply centres of Jewish education and agencies of Jewish propaganda. That is where the duty of the modern Synagogue lies, and particularly in America, which at present forms the great hope of Judaism, since the centres of Jews in the Old World have been destroyed or impoverished by the war, and more particularly in New York, where Jews are most numerous and the disintegrating influences most powerful.

Let us emulate the missionary zeal of our Christian neighbors. Let us work in behalf of Judaism, and maybe we shall recover for it in some measure the love and the loyalty of our people!

III

NEED JEWS BECOME ATHEISTS?

“By the Lord shall all the seed of Israel
be justified, and shall glory.”—*Isaiah*,
45, 25.

IT is one of the paradoxes of modern life to find so many Jews among the atheists. Religion has been of the very essence of Jewish existence. The Jews have been called the Chosen People, and they have been intimately associated with the God idea and with the Divine Name. “The Holy One and Israel are one,” said an ancient rabbi. Moreover, it is from the Jew that the world has gotten both its God and its Bible. Therefore, it is very strange to find so many Jewish men and women at present who either declare themselves openly as atheists, or live a life which stamps them as such.

Nevertheless, there are people who consider this of no moment. What difference

does it make, they ask, whether a Jew is an atheist or no? A Jew is a Jew for all that! If a man has a Jewish heart, or a Jewish soul, it is enough. These, however, are empty phrases.

The fact is that it matters a great deal whether Jews continue to hold on to the God-idea and the God-belief, or do not. It is the Jew's religion that has formed the justification of his existence and the glory of his life throughout the ages, and it is a demonstrable fact that according as he has abandoned his old faith, the Jew has been shorn of much of his traditional splendor.

This is not to say that there are not exceptions. There are. Some Jews have drifted away from their old religion, and yet have retained fine ethical and spiritual qualities. In some cases they have even given new expression and exemplification to their ancestral heritage. But as far as the majority are concerned, abandonment of their religion has been followed by moral and spiritual deterioration. If we witness today a wide-spread disintegration of Jewish life, if we witness large numbers of

Jewish people living on a low moral plane, if we witness an increase of materialism among us—in the sense not merely of worship of worldly goods but of deadness and apathy to things of the spirit—it is due to nothing so much as to decline of genuine religion among us and to relinquishment of what forms the foundation of true religion—belief and faith in God.

Indeed, this is one point made by Christian missionaries in defense of their work among Jews. We do not mean, they say, to convert any Jews who are loyal to their God and true to their own religion: our aim is to win those who have abandoned their own religion, and who have become atheists or believers in nothing—and of such there are a great many. Such, they add, are a drawback, a danger, to American life.

When we hear such arguments, we grow indignant. We resent missionaries of other faiths trying to make converts in our midst. Yet, the better course is to face the truth, and to admit that the encroachment of irreligion upon our territory is a deplorable condition and a menace to our life and repu-

tation. It is a fine pass we have come to when it is said—as, alas, it is said—that Jews are the least responsive to the religious appeal, that to speak to Jewish people in the name or in behalf of God, is to address deaf ears. It is certainly proper, under such circumstances, to seek to answer the question whether there is any ground for Jews abandoning their traditional attitude to religion and becoming atheists.

Let us look at the history of the Jew, first of all.

Does our history justify us in becoming atheists?

It is said that Frederick the Great once asked a certain philosopher for proof of the existence of Divine Providence and that the philosopher referred him to the continued existence of the Jew. If there were no Providence, he said, the Jews would not have perdured. Similarly, Judah Ha-Levi, in his classic work on Jewish philosophy, employs the history of the Jew as first proof of Divinity. When the King of the Khazars, in his quest of an adequate religion,

turns to the Jewish scholar, the latter in his exposition of Judaism speaks first of all of the God who has revealed Himself in the history of Israel. That is his first argument—the metaphysical considerations come later.

I know that today many will not be so easily satisfied. They will refuse to accept the mere survival of the Jew as proof of Providence. For, they will say, if the Jew has survived, is it not true that he has suffered all kinds of outrage and persecution? If the Jew is God's chosen people, then why has God permitted so much hardship and misery to overtake him? Why all this martyrdom of the Jew, this millennial martyrdom, which has not yet come to an end? People ask why the Armenians have been allowed to suffer such terrible persecution at the hands of the Turks—why God permits it. With much more reason might they ask concerning the hardships of the Jew!

Yet, who will deny that suffering is the secret and source of all progress, of all human beauty and achievement? It is part of the mystery of being. Our rabbis have told

us (long before Mr. Wells) that God Himself suffers with His children when they are afflicted. *Betsarathom lo tsar*—"When they are afflicted, He also suffers."

The Jew's history, thanks to his very martyrdom, has become one of the noblest records of mankind—the sacred tablet in the sanctuary of the human race. We realize that that history would have been impossible without the faith in God which formed the soul of Jewish existence, and which still inspires so many Jews in the lands of persecution and pogroms. *Abraham odenu omed liphne Adonay*: "Still do many sons and daughters of Abraham stand steadfast before the Lord!" But we cannot contemplate that history, notwithstanding its troubles and hardships, without feeling the operation of a divine power and a divine purpose. No man can rise from a study of Jewish history—with its heroism and achievement—without feeling fortified in faith.

Nor is there anything in modern philosophic or scientific thought to impel a Jew to become an atheist. It is not so very long

ago that people were encouraged to believe that in order to keep abreast the most advanced thought of the day, they had to give up religion and adopt atheism. Philosophy was not supposed to go hand in hand with religion, nor science with faith. "Whoever has Art and Philosophy," said Goethe, "has Religion; whoever has no Art, nor Philosophy, let him have Religion!" Such was the substance of old-time Positivism.

Right now we have in our country M. Lévy-Bruhl, the distinguished French sociologist, who is lecturing at Harvard University. He is a disciple of Auguste Comte, and Comte taught that there were three stages in the development of human thought—the theological, the metaphysic, and the positive (or scientific)—and that these three stages succeeded one another but could not go together. For a long time that teaching was accepted as the last pronouncement of philosophy.

Yet, what do we see today? Philosophers and scientists are among the foremost critics of such a gospel. We have learnt that philosophy cannot fathom the whole mystery

of Creation and that Science has not read the whole of its secret. Time and again the utterances of Science have proved inadequate. At this very moment Professor Einstein's discovery is occupying the attention of scientists the world over, and we are told that some of the fundamental formulæ of physics and mathematics might require revision as a result. What wonder that philosophers have turned more and more to a spiritual interpretation of life, not only as supplementary to Science, but as part of Science? And who says Spirit, says God.

"They flock together like tired birds. 'We sought
Full many stars in many skies to ken,
But ever knowledge disappointment brought.
Thy light alone, O Lord, burneth steadfastly!'"

The emperor Hadrian, the rabbis relate, once asked Rabbi Joshua whether there really was a Master in the universe. Surely, answered the rabbi, the world is not ownerless. Who created the world? demanded the ruler. God, answered the rabbi. If so, continued Hadrian, why does He not show Himself every now and then, so that men

might see Him and stand in awe of Him? Because, rejoined the rabbi, men cannot bear to see His splendor. I shall not believe you, insisted the emperor, unless you make me see Him. At noon the rabbi turned him toward the sky and said: Look at the sun and you will see Him! The emperor refused. Who can stare at the sun? he demanded. Quite so, answered the rabbi; but think well of what you are saying. If it is impossible for any creature to look at the sun, which is only one of His myriad ministers, how much more so to see the Holy One whose splendor fills the universe!

The scientist and the philosopher of today are realizing that lack of physical proof does not spell, nor compel, the denial of God. "Nor is it strange," as Dean Swift has written, "that there should be mysteries in divinity as well as in the commonest operations of Nature."

But, it is said, can we consider our own personal experience and yet believe in God? Indeed, from a certain point of view, there are in the world many things that tend to

upset our faith. But it depends upon the notion that we have of God. Some people believe that if there is a God, everything in the world should always be lovely and pleasant. Therefore, why is there so much trouble and affliction in the world? But that is not necessarily the correct idea of God. Is it not more nearly true to say that God is the Spirit that pervades the world and makes for Beauty and Righteousness—the Spirit that lives in us too and impells us to struggle toward Beauty and Righteousness? If there is suffering and illness, it is part of the struggle, but life with it is certainly more beautiful and significant than otherwise it would be. Take this Spirit out of the world and of human life, and what are they worth?

No one knows better the emptiness of a world without God, and the barrenness of human life without God, than some of our own people who have forsaken their religion because everything has been well with them. “Their gold and their silver have made them idols”—said the Prophet. Alas, that is still true all too often. Grown rich, they grow

godless. But what does it profit them? Soon they discover the nudity of their existence, and we hear them speak of the want of spiritual nourishment, and of soul hunger, and what not.

Rather than join the ranks of atheists, modern Jews should try to diffuse their own idea of God in the world, and to convert their fellowmen to it. The world today is seeking and sifting—it is trying to find a theism worthy of acceptance. Is not the theism of the Jew worthy of such acceptance? A recent Chinese writer has said that in Europe they have a religion which satisfies the heart but is at odds with the head. The Jewish God-idea, however, satisfies both the head and the heart. It is spiritual, it is ethical, it is progressive and comprehensive.

We need but think of the Jewish God-idea as revealed in the experience of the first and foremost of Israel's Prophets. When the Lord appeared to Moses, He appeared for an ethical purpose, in behalf of Freedom and Righteousness. Moreover, He

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showed Himself a spiritual God—Moses saw no image, he heard a Voice. And, finally, He declared Himself progressive, as when Moses demanded His name, the answer was: *Ehye asher ehye*, which is usually Englished “I am that I am,” but which should really be translated: “I shall be what I shall be.” Israel’s God-idea was to be progressive, in accord with the unfolding need and advancing intelligence of the ages. And such the Jewish God-idea has remained—ethical, spiritual, and progressive—the very kind of theism men are seeking today.

What we need is to be more eager and more energetic in spreading this God-idea among our fellowmen and in making it active in the promotion of human happiness. “Too long has Israel been silent,” as Mr. Israel Zangwill has said.

To thy task, then, O Irsael! Make you a new heart and a new spirit—as the Prophet demands—for why will ye die, O house of Israel—die a spiritual death, the death of the soul? Let us give heed to the teachings

of our history—to the course of contemporary thought—to the lessons of our own experience, and we shall realize that there is no good reason why we should forsake our God. On the contrary, now as of yore, it is by loyalty to the Lord, and by doing the Lord's work in the world, that sons and daughters of Israel shall be justified, and shall glory!

IV

NEED JEWS BECOME CHRISTIAN SCIENTISTS?

“Lo, they have rejected the word of
the Lord, and what wisdom is in them?”
—*Jeremiah* 8, 9.

ONE watches with amazement the vast number of Jewish people who are joining the Christian Science Church. The proportion of Jewish converts to this cult must be very high. Indeed, it is said that some Christian Science churches in the city of New York consist well-nigh entirely of former Jews. I say former Jews, because it must be clear that one cannot be a member of such a church and yet call himself a Jew. Judaism has never tolerated such combinations. If it has been said jestingly that Christian Science is neither scientific nor Christian, it may certainly be affirmed that one cannot join a Christian

Science church and still call himself an adherent of Judaism. So much the more reason for trying to answer the question whether Christian Science has anything to offer which would justify a Jew in quitting his own faith in its behalf.

Let us consider what it is that this new cult stands for, and what attracts so many people to it. Let us consider the best motives that inspire people to embrace it. No doubt, some go to it from lower motives. There are those who become Christian Scientists because so many others have done so. They are mimics. They change religions as lightly as one changes a coat. Others probably use the cult as a gateway to association with non-Jews. But apart from these two classes, there is undoubtedly a large number who go into Christian Science for what it offers them and for the help they get out of it. Let us, therefore, think of what these boons are and try to determine whether for the sake of them, one needs forsake the faith of one's fathers—whether, indeed, Judaism does not offer the same gifts even more abundantly than any

other faith to all such as will turn to it in a sincere and willing spirit.

As far as we know, Christian Science stands for three things: a cheerful attitude to life, first of all; then, a method of spiritual healing; and, finally, the denial of the existence of evil. These are the benefits which we are constantly told its devotees obtain from Christian Science. It makes them more cheerful than they ever were before. It cures them from disease without the aid of physicians or drugs. And it convinces them that evil has no real existence in the world—that evil is a mere figment of the imagination or a mental error.

If all this be so, how shall we blame people for turning to such a creed? Happiness is something everybody wants. All the world is looking for the blue-bird of M. Maeterlinck's fancy. And if Christian Science is the universal blue-bird, who could be blamed for embracing it?

The truth is, however, that Christian Science is far from being the religious panacea that some people represent or imagine

it to be. That it contains some good elements, no one will deny. That it has helped people, no one will deny. But it is equally true that it contains certain elements which no rational person can possibly accept, which far from removing error, are in themselves grossly erroneous, and which certainly are inferior to the teachings and the ideals of the Jewish religion. Moreover, it is certain that whatever is good in Christian Science was foreshadowed and promulgated by Judaism long ago, and a Jew need not go outside his own religious heritage to find such good. All he need do is to turn to the teachings and treasures of Judaism, and he will find all he seeks, if indeed it can be found.

Right here we touch the radical difference between Judaism and Christian Science—a difference which to every logical person must demonstrate the superiority of Judaism. Christian Science insists on a cheerful attitude to life. But so does Judaism. The keynote of Judaism is joy. *Ibhdu eth Adonay be-simha* might almost be called its motto. “Serve the Lord with joy!” “Work

with the Lord in joy!" "Worship the Lord joyously!" All this is implied in the Hebrew word *Ibhdu*. This is the spirit of Judaism. It is not a lugubrious religion. And we know from the history of the Jew that this joyous element of Judaism has helped both the whole Jewish people and millions of Jewish individuals over the rough places of life—helped them to live, to toil, and to endure. Judaism has inculcated joy just as much as any religion founded on faith and hope.

At the same time, Judaism has never been guilty of confusing true joy with false joy. There is a certain kind of cheerfulness which is not genuine—it is assumed, superficial, forced—and such hypocritic cheerfulness is worse than none, for it hides the truth and leaves the heart empty. There is too much of such feigned cheerfulness in the world. It does no good. It is like taking opiates. The victim is the worse for it when the effect is over.

Much more beneficent is the joyousness which Judaism tries to develop. It does not deny that there is in life many an oc-

casation for sorrow. Indeed, some of the most beautiful things in life may spring out of the heart of sorrow. Sorrow not only is real, but it is beneficent. Some of the world's noblest achievements have been inspired by sorrow. Sorrow has brought forth some of the world's noblest poetry. "Our sweetest songs," says Shelley in his ode "To a Skylark," "are those that tell of saddest thought." Heine has said that it was out of his great sorrows that he made his little songs. "He who would like to sing well," says a Spanish song, "Let him sing when grieved at heart." Similarly, some of the world's noblest philanthropies were engendered by sorrow. The most adored teacher of the Christian world is called by his devotees the Man of Sorrows, as the Prophet called Israel the Man of Sorrows, through whose suffering and affliction the world was to be healed.

Judaism, I say, recognizes not only the reality but the beneficence of sorrow. Yet, it bids us turn sorrow into joy through the ministry of faith and hope—those chief elements of the religious life. "Light is

sown for the righteous and joy for the upright in heart!" This is the conviction with which Judaism seeks to fill our heart. It would not have us go about everlastingly smiling and grinning, as if that were our sole duty, it would not dull our hearts to sorrow, when sorrow comes, and thus rob us of sensibility, but rather come what may it would have us make sure we are on the side of the right, and then trust in that light and joy which are stored up for those whose heart is clean and straight. "Observe mercy and justice and hope upon thy God continually!" And, with all due deference to Christian Science, I believe this is the more wholesome and more helpful doctrine.

The same may be said in regard to disease.

To know anything at all about these matters, is to know that many an ailment can be treated by spiritual means more effectively than with drugs. No physician worthy the name is ignorant of this fact, nor fails to act upon it. Of Dr. Osler, the illustrious physician who died the other day, Walt Whitman, who was treated by him, said

thirty years ago: "Osler believes in the gospel of encouragment—of putting the best construction on things." No physician of worth has ever failed to take account of the spiritual element in healing; certainly not those Jewish physicians who like their great prototype, Maimonides, combine medical skill with philosophic and religious understanding.

But to jump from this fact to the affirmation that every disease is a mental error, and can be cured by mental or spiritual means, is an exaggeration or aberration which no rational person can accept. It matters not how many arguments may be advanced, or how many passages of Scriptures may be twisted, to fortify such a thesis. It goes counter to the facts, and no person in his senses can subscribe to it.

Indeed, in reality even Christian Science does not accept this thesis. In France I met some Christian Science healers, who made the rounds of the hospitals where many of our American men were sick and wounded. No doubt, they helped them by their kindly ministration. Some of them

did admirable work. But would they for a moment have asserted that they could help those men, or save their lives, without the intervention of the surgeons?

Just here we find Judaism much more true. It does not brush aside disease as unreal, as an error of the mind. It warns us against the kind of life which results in illness. It lauds the physician who seeks to cure the sick. It urges us to combat disease and to create agencies for the diminution of its ravages. But at the same time it reminds us of the great help which faith—with the exercises of faith—affords in the healing of disease and the gaining of health and fortitude.

“Whence comes Solace? Not from seeing
What is doing, suffering, being:
Not from noting Life’s conditions,
Not from heeding Time’s monitions;
But in cleaving to the Dream,
And in gazing on the gleam
Whereby gray things golden seem.”

Nor can we deny that Judaism is more sound than Christian Science in its attitude to the general fact of evil in the world.

We are asked to believe that evil does not exist in the world—that if we think it exists, it is a fault of our own mind. We are asked to think nothing but joy, and goodness, and happiness, and so forth. The question is, Does such an attitude really remove the evil from the world? Does it, for instance, abolish all the misery that exists in the world today as a result of the war? It is to shut oneself up in the worst of fool's paradises to have such illusions. Today, when the world is full of misery, when in some countries men, women, and little children are starving, and dying, and being massacred—today for us who are comfortable and content to maintain that there is no evil, is to be guilty of sin against the very Holy Spirit. Moreover, to comfort oneself with such notions is to make impossible all improvement among men, all progress in the elimination of evil from the world. What we want is to face the evil that does exist among men, and then make every effort possible to uproot it. And this is what the true prophets of Judaism, and all true Jews, have tried to do—not to heal the wounds of

the world lightly, crying Peace, when there is no peace—but rather to expose and to deplore the evil and to move mankind to get rid of it and to put the good in its place. Who can fail to see that in this regard also Judaism is right?

This being so, what advantage have they who leave the Jewish religion for the sake of Christian Science? “Lo, they have rejected the word of the Lord, but what wisdom have they got?” Of course, we have a right to joy and health and the good. But they can be gotten only if we live so as to earn them. Otherwise, we possess only shadows.

The trouble, however, is that often we neglect Judaism, and then we wonder why it does not help us. There is many a Jew and Jewess who never looked at the Bible with their native Jewish eyes, though now they scan it through the spectacles of Christian Science and think it full of marvelous things.

Let us love our Judaism, let us study it, let us work for it heart and soul,—let us

work as hard for Judaism as do the converts to Christian Science for their new cult—and then we shall find what rich gifts it has in store for its devotees, far surpassing those of any other faith.

V

NEED JEWS BECOME ETHICAL CULTURISTS?

"The Lord hath a controversy with His people, and He will plead with Israel."—*Micah* 6, 2.

AMONG the various new cults that have taken Jewish people away from their own religion, none has surpassed Ethical Culture. It is not my purpose to quarrel with the founders or promoters of that movement. No one can deny that the movement has done some good. It has been associated with several activities of undoubted educational and civic importance. It has unquestionably stimulated its members to ethical effort in different directions and contributed to the diffusion of ethical idealism. Nevertheless, one cannot help asking whether the ideals and the work of the Ethical Culture Society are such as to justify a Jew in leaving his own faith, and whether a Jew needs depart

from his own religion, in order to do the things which Ethical Culture demands.

For, this is what it comes to. Jews identified actively with the Ethical Culture movement are as a rule lost to Judaism. It is distinctly a movement away from Judaism, though it was founded by Jews, and though it is regarded by some good and loyal Jewish people as in no way injurious to Judaism, or even as one phase of modern Jewish activity. No doubt, some few may join the Ethical Culture group and yet remain loyal to the old faith; but the majority not only abandon Judaism, but become hostile to it, regarding it as something inferior and to be ashamed of. While originally Ethical Culture was designed as a substitute for both Judaism and Christianity, it has finally led to relinquishment of Judaism and partial adoption of Christianity, if it has not become wholly a gateway to Christianity.

Take, for instance, the holidays. That they do not observe the Sabbath, the traditional symbol of Judaism, goes without saying. But other Jewish holidays, even those fraught with much ethical significance,

they have also brushed aside. Christmas they observe, but Hanukkah they ignore. They keep Easter, but Passover does not exist for them. Holidays founded on the theology of Christianity—a theology which even many Christians are discarding—they find acceptable, but holidays carrying the heroic message of Israel's fight for freedom and morality are not good enough for them. Who will deny, then, that Ethical Culture, with its numerous recruits from Judaism, means either immediate or ultimate apostasy?

Granting, then, that the aims of the Ethical Culture movement are good, is there any good reason why Jews shall leave their own faith and religious obligations in order to pursue those aims? If we examine this question calmly and conscientiously, I think we shall say No.

For, what is the chief aim of Ethical Culture? It is the love, the study, and the pursuit of the right. "Dedicated to the ever-increasing knowledge and practice and love of the right"—thus reads the legend

on the wall of its meeting-house. This is what Ethical Culture has stood for. Theology, it says, does not count. Metaphysical speculation does not matter. The right counts. Ethics is pragmatic. What makes it worth while is the practical acceptance of it and its application to everyday life. Therefore, the Ethical Culture group dedicated itself to the love, and the study, and the practice of the Right.

But can anyone at all acquainted with Judaism say that this very thing has not at all times formed the essence of Judaism? Judaism has had a long history. It has gone through many stages. It has been in touch with many forms of thought and culture. It has undergone many minor changes. But in one respect Judaism has remained invariably the same. It has always been an ethical religion, a religion which made love and practice of the right both the foundation and the keynote of its structure. This is so true of Judaism, that one need not have much knowledge of Jewish doctrine or history to be able to confirm it. It is something he who runs may read.

Indeed, one need but think of some of the fundamental phrases and outstanding personalities of the Jewish religion in order to recall this fact.

What is the classic phrase of the Bible for religious conduct? "To walk before the Lord and to be perfect." This is the Bible's understanding of the religious life. The tribute it pays to its own early heroes is that they walked with the Lord and were perfect with Him—*tamim*, wholly with Him, as the Hebrew has it. To be wholly at one with God in one's conduct, is the Bible's idea of perfection. "Ye shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy!" The ideal of religion was the ideal of ethical integrity, of moral perfection and holiness. Israel knew no other concept of religion.

And when we think of the Prophets, the chief men of Israel, what then? We are reminded of men who were the most powerful champions and advocates of the Right the world has ever known. To them the right was the most important thing not only in human life but in the universe. It was the basic principle of the world, the most

enduring thing in Creation—the mountains might depart, nations might vanish, their own people might be destroyed, but Righteousness nevermore: such was their faith.

“The heavens shall vanish away like smoke,
And the earth shall wax old like a garment,
And they that dwell therein shall die in like
manner;
But My salvation shall be for ever,
And My righteousness shall not be dismayed!”

And the Prophets could see no salvation nor happiness for their own people, nor for humanity, as long as the demands of the Right were violated. “Cease to do evil, learn to do right!” was the plea of Isaiah. *Dirshu tob weal ra lemaan tiheyu* begged Micah. “Seek—study—demand—pursue the good, and not evil—that ye might live!” Had Israel followed the right, the Prophet affirmed, they would have escaped downfall. And today, as we survey the course of civilization and the history of human failure and suffering, we may well ask whether, if mankind had followed the precept of the Prophets, its misfortunes might not have been avoided.

“Oh, that thou wouldst hearken to My commandments!

Then would thy peace be as a river,
And thy righteousness as the waves of the sea.”

Certain, however, it is that no one can read the records or recall the history of Judaism without realizing that the love, the study, and the practice of the right was central to its teachings. Moses, said Josephus, did not make religion a department of virtue, but the various virtues departments of religion. Why, then, should any Jew abandon Judaism because of concern for ethical pursuits?

I know some will say that Ethical Culture cut loose from the God-idea, from theology and speculation, and therefore it is superior to Judaism. It confines its interest to ethics alone. But has this really proved a sign of superiority? Has it proved possible for Ethical Culture to ignore the question of God and to refrain from speculation on the meaning of life and of human destiny?

The fact is that the people of the Ethical

Culture group can no more escape these topics than any other rational person. At first, in the exuberance of youth, a man may be content with action. But the more mature he grows, the more contemplative he must get. He cannot act long, without being prompted to ask the meaning and purpose of action and of life. Particularly in profound moments, at critical turns of human experience, in moments when the human soul, as M. Maeterlinck has said, is most alone, in moments of birth and of death—at such times we cannot escape those questions which touch the core of our life and destiny. At such moments we are likely to turn to divine faith for the strength we need.

An incident I heard of the other day will illustrate it. There was a Jewish lady in this city who had been among the first members of the Ethical Culture Society. Both she and her husband attended the meetings of the Society for many years. Yet, when her husband died, much to the surprise of her family, she produced her old Jewish Prayer Book and began reading anew the

old prayers she had known in youth but had laid aside for many a day. It was in those old meditations she sought solace when trouble came. This story I heard from the lips of her own son, who himself was a member of the Ethical Culture Society, and as I heard it I could not but think of those pregnant words of Isaiah, in which he tells us of what becomes in moments of real sorrow of the pleasant plants we have planted as we forgot the God of our salvation:

“For thou hast forgotten the God of thy salvation,
And thou hast not been mindful of the Rock of
thy stronghold;
Therefore thou didst plant plants of pleasant-
ness,
And didst set it with strange slips;
In the day of thy planting thou didst make it to
grow,
And in the morning thou didst make thy seed to
blossom—
A heap of boughs in the day of grief
And of desperate pain!”

At such moments, I say, we feel the strength that comes from divine faith.

And, indeed, does not the very practice of the right depend, in large measure, on the support and constraint of faith—on the

urge of religion? It is all very well to laud and to commend the right. It is all very well to sing the praises of an ethical life. But when it comes to the actual living of the moral life—with the self-denials and self-discipline and sacrifices it entails—does not ethics prove a more complex thing than the academic lecturer would have us believe? Does not the question arise why we should consider ethics at all? If the world is a place without God, then who is there to lay upon us any ethical compulsion and to set before us any ethical ideals?

The nobility of Jewish ethics has been due to the high standard and the exalted pattern upon which it is founded. "Ye shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy!" Perhaps in ordinary moments we can get along with an ethical doctrine based solely on our own impulse of right. But in difficult moments, in decisive moments, in moments of temptation and confusion, we need something higher and stronger than that: we need an ethics loftier and more potent and inspiring than the dictation of our own caprice or desire. It is at such times that

we feel the ethical value of faith. *Akh ba-Adonay tzadoqoth we-oz*, as Isaiah has it: "Only through the Lord do we gain strength for life and its ethical tasks." Or, as the medieval Christian mystic has it: "Divine faith is the beginning of every grace, of all gifts, and of all divine virtues, since it is a certain supernatural light and the foundation of all good."

No wonder in recent years we have witnessed renewed discussion of religious topics among Ethical Culture people. They are now trying to make religion a department of ethics. But if Religion is needed, surely none better exists for devotees of Ethical Culture than Judaism—Judaism with its simple creed—Judaism with its emphasis on ethics—Judaism summed up by one of its Prophets as a fusion of justice, love, and humility; and surely none better for those devotees of Ethical Culture who themselves are, or were, Jews.

This is the controversy the Lord today has with his people, this His plea with Israel!

Why shall we abandon Judaism for the sake of the very things Judaism has taught the world and for the vindication of which Jewish martyrs have time and again given their lives? "Whatever the scientific student of culture may think of Hebrew ethics and religion," Professor Ellwood writes in his book on "The Social Problem," "he must acknowledge the conquest of the Western world by Hebrew ethical and religious ideas and ideals to be one of the most wonderful phenomena of recorded history." But this religion and this ethics the Jew not only taught; he fought for it, also, and suffered for it. Did not the Maccabees shed their blood so that Righteousness might live, and did not their sacrifices save the moral civilization of the world? Is not this the story we read in the lights kindled in their memory? Is not this the message of Judaism? "O, house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the Lord!" Let us learn to know and to love our faith, and we shall find we need none other to satisfy our ethical needs and to spur on our ethical ideals!

VI

NEED JEWS BECOME UNITARIANS?

“Lo, this is our God: we have waited for Him, and He will save us.”—*Isaiah* 25, 9.

THE other day I had a rather strange experience. A gentleman brought his children to our Religious School, and registering them for admission, he remarked that he himself belonged to a certain Unitarian Church, yet he was willing his children should receive instruction in the Jewish religion. Later on, he added, they might decide for themselves whether to remain Jews or to become Unitarians.

This incident served to remind me of the considerable number of Jewish people who lately have identified themselves with the Unitarians, and of the overtures made to other Jews to follow their example. It is an open secret that even on the governing

boards of certain Unitarian churches are found the names of former Jews, just as we find such names on similar committees of more orthodox Christian churches. May we not, therefore, stop to ask the question—nay, ought we not to ask the question—whether there is any good reason why Jews should become Unitarians?

At first blush the arguments advanced in favor of such conversion might seem very plausible. There is not much difference, we are told, between Unitarianism and Judaism. The two religions stand for the same spiritual and ethical ideals. Unitarianism, we are informed, rejects those very dogmas of Christianity which Judaism has always opposed. Unitarianism, we are assured by some of its exponents, even recognizes that its noblest ideas of religion and morality came down to it from Judaism. Inasmuch, therefore, as Judaism and Unitarianism have so much in common, why shall not Jews give up their separateness and become Unitarians?

Though such arguments may seem allur-

ing, they cannot satisfy the thoughtful person. No such man will abandon his own ancestral religion simply because another religion has come to adopt its views and visions. On the contrary, if Unitarians have come around to the Jewish point of view—such a person will say—then let them adopt Judaism. Religion is much too serious a part of life for an honest man to give it up lightly in favor of another religion. “The strength and the weakness of a man,” an eminent English critic has said, “are rooted in his religious belief. It presides over the beginning and the end of his days; it hallows his going out and his coming in.” One condition only might justify us to abandon Judaism and become Unitarians, namely, if it could be proved that Unitarianism as a religion is superior to Judaism, and not merely that it has certain things in common with the old religion.

Is, then, Unitarianism superior to Judaism?

We are told it is superior, first of all, because Unitarianism is a universal religion,

embracing people of different kinds, whereas Judaism is merely a racial or national religion. If this were a true description of Judaism, it would form a serious indictment. But that it is not true must be admitted by everybody familiar with the contents of Judaism and with its influence upon the world. The very fact that Unitarians admit that they got their ethical and religious ideas from the Jews proves that they contradict themselves when they maintain that Judaism is not universal. The fact is that Judaism has been a universal religion in its ideals and teachings from its very beginning, and though in name it has not been generally adopted it has exercised practically a universal influence.

We need but think of the Bible. It is the most universal book man possesses. There is nothing like it in the whole range of the world's literature. It has been translated into hundreds of tongues, from the most refined languages to crudest dialects, it has been carried to the remotest corners of the globe, and it has served as foundation to the moral codes and spiritual systems

of most diverse peoples. Does not this show that the Bible is a universal work—that what it tells and teaches is able to appeal to all manner of men and races?

Moreover, would this have been possible if Judaism, which produced the Bible, were a mere tribal religion? No Bible rises higher than its source. The Jewish Bible could not have become so universal a book if the Jewish religion from which it sprang were not universal, as universal it always has been, notwithstanding affirmation to the contrary, in its construction of the world, in its precepts of righteousness, in its ideals and hopes. When Isaiah utters the words of Israel's God, "Turn unto Me and be saved, all ye ends of the earth, for I am God and there is none other!"—when Isaiah, I say, utters those Divine words, he sums up the universal character which has distinguished Judaism from beginning to end. It is true that Israel was charged to do the work of Judaism in the world, but the work itself was designed for the whole world, and none was excluded from joining in the doing of it.

Why, asked the ancient rabbis, was the Torah given in the wilderness? It was given publicly and on common ground—in the wilderness—for the reason that had it been given in the land of Israel, the Jews might have asserted that the other peoples had no share in it: therefore, it was proclaimed in a public place, so that any one who wished to embrace it might come and do so. Nor, added the rabbis, was the Torah given in the night time, or in silence, any more than to a limited number: On the contrary, the Bible relates that the Torah was proclaimed in the day-time, “when it was morning,” and all the people saw the thunderings. It is as if the Lord had said, When first I gave the Law I did not give it in a place of thick darkness, nor said I to the children of Jacob, To you have I given it and not unto others: I have not limited it to a few!

The more people learn the truth about Judaism, the more they realize the foolishness of denying its universalistic character. No doubt Unitarianism has attracted and influenced many good people. Some of the

most noteworthy figures in the political and literary history of America have professed Unitarianism; but who can possibly compare its scope with that of Judaism?

But, we are told, Judaism has outlived its usefulness. A great and influential religion once upon a time, it has come to the end of its task: it has accomplished its work. This may sound definitive; but may we not question the correctness of such an assertion? Has Judaism really finished its work? Not if we judge it by its ideals and purposes.

The work of a religion is like that of an idealist. It is not done until the ideal has become real. That is the only test. There is no other test. What Christian would affirm that the work of Jesus has been done, simply because the world possesses the story of his life and his teachings? Or, that Christianity has done its work, because it has produced such men as St. Francis of Assisi or Leo Tolstoy? Is it fair, then, to say that Judaism's work was accomplished when it produced Jesus of Nazareth? It is by its ideals that we must judge the task of

Judaism. Nor will its task be done until its ideals have become real in the life of mankind. In his great vision of the celestial ladder, with the angels going up and down between heaven and earth—the most suggestive vision of religion recorded in literature—the Patriarch Jacob hears the Lord saying, “I shall not leave thee until I have done all that I have spoken to thee.” Nor will the Lord let go of the Jew until all that He has spoken to and through the Jew has been done. He will not leave the Jew go, no matter how many Jews may try to run away from their task, and no matter how often it is said that the Jew’s work is done.

Have, then, the ideals of Judaism been fulfilled? Not if we think of the teachings of Judaism, on the one hand, and of actual conditions in the world, on the other. Judaism, for instance, teaches goodness, justice, human fellowship, and peace. Its supreme ideal is to turn the world into a divine dominion. Are these the things we are facing today round about us? Judaism has preached and even predicted the Messianic age. Has the Messianic age arrived,

though some think it came nineteen hundred years ago? In the face of such conditions, for any one to try to read Judaism out of court on the ground that it had accomplished its work, is sheer nonsense. What we need is to realize how far the world still is from having absorbed the doctrines and fulfilled the ideals of the Jewish religion, and to redouble our efforts—this, rather than keep on babbling about the discharge of Judaism from the service of humanity.

Still, we are informed, Judaism suffers because it does not accept Jesus. In this regard, at least, Unitarianism is supposed to be superior. Jesus, we are reminded, is the leading religious teacher of the world. He was a Jew, and yet the Jews do not accept him, while Unitarianism does.

But in this regard, also, Judaism is rather right than wrong. It is inaccurate to maintain that in the Unitarian sense Jews do not accept Jesus. For, we must bear in mind, that today there are two kinds of Jesus: there is the Orthodox Christian Jesus and there is the Unitarian Jesus — the former

associated with the various metaphysical notions of traditional Christianity and the latter merely an ethical and spiritual leader. If, however, it is merely a question of Jesus's personality and ethical teachings and spiritual idealism, there is a large number of Jews who appreciate him as wholeheartedly as anybody else.

But this is quite another matter from what the Unitarians would have us do—even the most liberal of them. They would have us accept Jesus as the supreme and sole leader—as the exclusive religious leader—and this the intelligent Jew can do no more than Ralph Waldo Emerson could do it. When Emerson left the Unitarian ministry, one reason was his inability to accord such preeminence to Jesus as Unitarianism demanded.

Nor can we accord Jesus such exclusive preeminence. On the contrary, though we recognize his uniqueness and grandeur, we are convinced that he is not sufficient to all our needs. Jesus himself turned to the Prophets of Israel for light on the profoundest questions of life. Could we do

less? There is many a question agitating the world today for a proper solution of which we need the Prophets of Israel, with their teachings of justice and righteousness and mercy, even more than Jesus; and there is many a non-Jew that recognizes it.

It is significant that when the other day one of the leading newspapers of New York printed a symposium on the meaning of Christmas, Mr. Edgar Lee Masters, the eminent American poet, had the following to say in regard to Jesus: "If your mind was highly sensitive but wholly strange to Homer, Æschylus, and the Synoptic Gospels, and they were placed before you for an opinion, what story would you say was the most moving, the most profound, the most significant, the most beautiful? Would you not say that the Gospels are the most beautiful literature in the world and the most articulate of every phase of the soul's experience in this world? But," he added, "suppose you knew after reading these Gospels for the first time that they have caused more suffering and more war than all the other things put together, a hundred times over,

and are today the mainstay of this terrible world as it is, — what would you say? I would say, after thinking as hard as I could, that so far as the world has now gone, it would be better if Jesus had never been born.”

What was in Mr. Masters’s mind was that the teaching of Jesus had not proved sufficient to make the world a better place, nor is it enough for the solution of the problems confronting us. Why, then, shall we decry Judaism because it does not share the Unitarian view of Jesus, which, by the way, is neither Christian nor Jewish?

If, however, Unitarianism is in no wise superior to Judaism, why shall any Jew turn to it in preference to his own religion, with all its heroic history and manifold achievements? If for no other reason we should prefer our own religion because of the great history that it has had—because it has stood the test of many ages and many lands, compared to which Unitarianism, with no matter what good it may have done, is but as of yesterday.

Let us think of the magnificence of Judaism's history, of the loftiness of its ideals, and of the universality of its influence, and we shall see reason enough for preferring it to any other more recent or more fashionable faith.

VII

WHY SHALL JEWS REMAIN JEWS?

“Thou hast avouched the Lord to be thy God—and the Lord hath avouched thee to be His own treasure.”—*Deuteronomy* 26, 17-18.

IT is not seldom one hears the question asked nowadays why Jews shall remain Jews.

There was a time when such a query would have seemed inconceivable. Jews used to regard themselves as the Chosen People, and it was held a privilege as well as a duty for a Jew to be a Jew. Jews considered themselves everlastingly committed—yes, consecrated—to Judaism. To be born a Jew meant to remain a Jew. It was one of the paramount duties and permanent facts of life.

At present, however, this is not so universally recognized. Young people particu-

larly want to be convinced that there are some positive reasons for adhering to the faith of their forefathers. They refuse to be governed by the past alone. The mere fact that their ancestors were Jews is not enough for them. Nor is it sufficient to persuade them that other religions are not superior to Judaism. All this is negative. They want to know whether there are any positive reasons why a Jew should remain a Jew, notwithstanding the difficulties and inconveniences connected with such loyalty.

None can deny that remaining a loyal Jew is bound up with certain difficulties. Even in this country of freedom and equality, the Jew has to suffer from certain discriminations and prejudices, which some of us feel very keenly. For example, I have often heard people complain of the difficulties they encounter in placing their children at desirable schools. It is certainly not pleasant to have one's child turned away from a certain school simply because he is a Jew. Nor are the other discriminations practiced against Jews agreeable. It is idle to play the supermundane aristocrat

and to brush these facts aside as nothing. Of course, compared to the persecutions which Jews have suffered in other times and which they still endure in some parts of the world, what we encounter in America is of little consequence. Yet, the very fact that such things occur even in this land dedicated to liberty, equality, and the unhampered pursuit of happiness, emphasizes the sacrifice which is involved in remaining a Jew, and it is responsible for the defection of not a few. No wonder, we hear people demand the reasons why, quite apart from considerations of the past, Jews should remain Jews?

Now, I believe, the first reason is one of self-respect. It is commonly admitted that the root of man's moral and spiritual integrity is in self-respect. If a man has lost his self-respect, he has lost the chief element of character and contentment. Nothing in the world can compensate for it. For all beauty of character and all peace of mind come from within. To have cast away one's self-respect, therefore, means to have

destroyed the roots from which true character and happiness grow.

It is impossible for a Jew to turn his back upon Judaism without forfeiting in a measure his self-respect. No matter how much he may try to conceal or to explain it, he is conscious in his heart of having done something fundamentally wrong, and, therefore, subversive of ethical and spiritual integrity. He might be content if he were convinced that Judaism really is the inferior and obsolete religion it sometimes is represented to be. But that he knows not to be the case.

For, after all, wherever he turns he finds indications of the grandeur and the beauty of Judaism, of its perfection and persistence. Everywhere he finds traces of the tremendous part Judaism has played in the history of mankind. Everywhere he encounters tributes to Judaism and the Jewish people even from the mouths of their antagonists. Everywhere he finds proof of the important part Judaism still plays in the expression and direction of human thought.

If, for instance, he reads Mr. Austin

Harrison's discussion of the economic struggle going on in the world today, he finds it presented as a contest between two antagonistic Jewish ideals. "The world's message is Jewish," affirms Mr. Harrison, one of England's foremost publicists. If it is "The Emancipation of Massachusetts," by Mr. Brooke Adams, that the intelligent Jew happens to read, with its Preface which has caused so much discussion, what does he find? That though the author presents a preposterous portrayal of Moses, and is guilty of some supercilious generalities about the Jews, he admits that Moses was the first great optimist of whom any record remains, that he was the prototype of all those who have followed, that the moral principles which he laid down have been accepted as sound from that day to this, and are still written up in our churches as a standard for men and women, however scantily they may be observed, and finally that "the great Jewish epic always has had, and always must have, a capital influence on human thought."

Everywhere, I say, the open-minded Jew

finds traces of Jewish influence and tributes to the genius of Judaism. How, then, is it possible for any Jew to discard Judaism, to abandon such a heritage, without losing his self-respect? Suppose there are difficulties, hardships, even sacrifices. So much the more reason for clinging—for remaining true to the heroic example set by the Jew throughout the ages. And if a man is willing to do the thing that robs him of self-respect, how can he expect his fellowmen to have any respect for him? There are those who think they can ingratiate themselves with fashionable non-Jews by concealing their own Jewish identity, or by changing their original names, or by transforming their native noses, or by belittling their inherited faith; but it requires little knowledge of the world to know in what contempt such people are held by the very people with whom they curry favor. Such renegades may be exploited by their patrons, they may be flattered, they may be even tolerated socially, but they are not trusted, nor admired. They certainly do not enjoy true contentment. "Self-knowl-

edge, self-reverence, self-control," Tennyson has said, "lead man to sovereign power." But central to all is self-reverence, self-respect. Therefore, one may well affirm that for the sake of their own self-respect Jews should remain Jews.

But it is no less desirable that for the good of the world Jews should remain Jews. Because Judaism has something to say to the world at present.

Since the war we have heard a great deal about a new social order. But the more the subject is discussed, the more people must realize that a new order cannot be brought about by political and economic factors alone. It will result from spiritual forces. Even those that discuss the present situation from an economic or political point of view admit it. Economically and politically the nations have gotten themselves into a whirligig, from which it is hard to see just how they are going to emerge. The only hope for civilization, says Mr. John Galsworthy, lies in "a change of the directing mood." Or, as Mr. Maynard Keynes puts

it, "In one way only can we influence the hidden currents (which flow continually beneath the surface of political history)—by setting in motion those forces of instruction and inspiration which change opinion." "The assertion of truth," he adds, "the unveiling of illusion, the dissipation of hate, the enlargement and instruction of men's hearts and minds, must be the means." The world's future depends upon the setting in motion of spiritual forces. "States," says Mr. Galsworthy, "must reorganize education spiritually—in other words, must introduce religion."

Religion will play a part in the making of the new day and of the new social relations. If this be so, there is no religion so competent to help humanity at this juncture as Judaism. And this for the simple reason that Judaism has always taught and fought for those very things which today are most needful to the improvement of the human lot. Judaism has always championed Righteousness as the governing principle of life—Righteousness rather than force.

Judaism has stood for Reality in the appraisal of life, rather than for romantic and self-indulgent delusion—reality in the sense of viewing and valuing things as they are, rather than throwing over them a mantle of pious illusion, reality in the sense of seeing and speaking the truth about men and conditions, however disagreeable the truth might be. And Judaism has preached and demanded Reform as a means to happiness—Reform, which the Prophets sometimes called Repentance and sometimes Return, and which means an honest recognition of the imperfection of human life and of social systems and an earnest effort to eradicate the evil and to improve. These have been the three R's of Judaism: Righteousness—Reality—Reform. And these are the three things the world needs today to be taught by Religion and to translate into practice if we are really to have a new order worthy of the ideals and the sacrifices of the war.

Thus, for the good of the world no less than for our own sake, we should remain Jews. The other day I ran across a recent study of the Hebrews by a Spanish histo-

rian. In his concluding sentence this author has the following to say: "If the history of the wars of Israel do not occupy an eminent place in the world, the religious doctrine founded by their great thinkers has placed the Jews for ever in the front of the movement of ideas of humanity. This is their glory, which the injustice of men can never destroy."

The religious doctrine of Israel, however, still has much to do and much in store for mankind. It is idle to say that the doctrine of the Jew can be taken care of by others. Even Christian scholars now acknowledge the value of the continued existence of the Jewish people to the conservation of that religious and ethical doctrine which the world gained from the Jew. The Jew is the appointed custodian and apostle of this doctrine, and if he were to cease, the doctrine itself would be imperilled—its purity and persistence might be lost.

Let us think of the grandeur and the glory of Judaism! Let us think of its value to ourselves and to the rest of mankind!

Let us think of its needfulness to the men of today, and we shall see ample reason why Jews should remain Jews—now and forever!

“Instead of being forsaken and hated, with none to heed, I shall make thee the pride of the world, the joy of all generations.”

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